

KOO JEONG A

DIA:BEACON

■ ON VIEW THROUGH MAY 2

DIA AT THE HISPANIC SOCIETY, MANHATTAN

■ ON VIEW THROUGH JUNE 26

DAN FLAVIN ART INSTITUTE, BRIDGEHAMPTON

■ ON VIEW THROUGH SEPT. 4

curving sword or tusk of carbon steel that emerges from the floor and extends almost to the dropped ceiling, but seems to cling shyly to that pillar. Nearby is *Mystral*, a small cutout in the pale-green plywood floor that reveals a set of tiny red steps, each tread about an inch deep, descending into the subfloor darkness. Other works are placed near the ceiling, and range from a scent dispenser (what you see is not the point) to a spider web of fine monofilament, which can be spotted only if you look up, just so, to see tiny glints of light reflecting off it.

In sum, this is a show that requires a guided tour or professional training in detective work. I found it equally annoying and—to my surprise—endearing. It is so focused, so quiet, so expectant of perceptual examination, so opposite to the large scale and histrionic gestures of many artists (say, Kiefer). The restraint might be explained partly by geography: Koo is



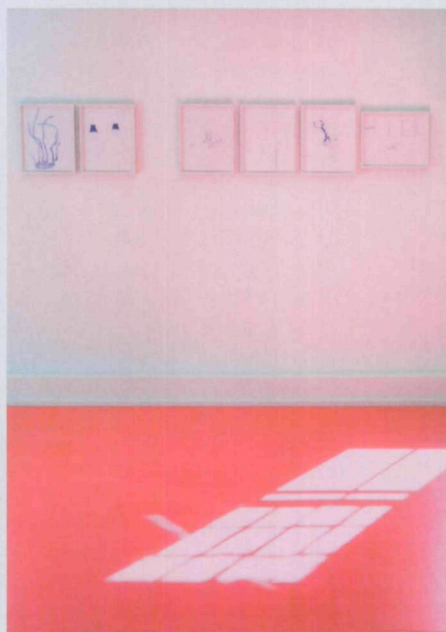
Left, view of Koo Jeong A's exhibition "Constellation Congress," 2010, at Dia at the Hispanic Society.

Below, view of Koo's installation, showing the drawing series "Dr. Vogt," 2010; at the Dan Flavin Art Institute. Photos Cathy Carver.

A FIRST-TIME VISITOR to Dia's temporary exhibition venue at the Hispanic Society might wonder about the organization's choice of such a lopsided, pillar-interrupted space. How contrary that the apparent entry into the galleries—a glass door straight in front of you inside the building's vestibule—is actually a Plexiglas panel that does not open. You must take a ramp to the right or push an unmarked, handleless door at the left and go up a few Deco-style steps.

Every one of these features is the work of Koo Jeong A. She raised the gallery floor 14 inches, installed the ramp, panel and door, and built a false wall to subvert symmetry. That's only the beginning of the discombobulation. The exhibition leaflet specifies that seven works (all 2010) are to be found in the dimly lit space. Only *Ousss Sister* is obvious, and even it comes with frustration. It consists of two huge white boxes that together are about the size of a shipping container; a foot of space separates them, and on their facing walls are projections that can be seen in full only from an extremely acute angle. The video is a silent black-and-white that seems to consist of time-lapse views of clouds speeding across Earth as seen from a satellite.

You'll also notice incisions in one wall defining a large rectangle with a number of inward-leading cuts, not obviously representing anything. This is *Diamona*. Close examination shows it to be painted, not cut, but the illusion persists. Behind one of the room's structural columns, *Bridge* is hiding. It's a



Korean-born, and reticence remains a strong option in the art of many Asian cultures.

The Bridgehampton show is both alike and quite different. The similarity is an altered floor. It is here painted a mottled hot pink/red that turns the entire room rosy, and the after-effect makes the view through windows a complementary green. The differences are that there's plenty of light and that the room is ringed with small, cartoony ballpoint drawings. Landscapes, nude but genderless figures in yoga positions, abstractions and schematic drawings of the human digestive system are among the 400 images Koo made for the show. This adds to the Manhattan show's quietness a quirky humor and a sense

that Koo observes the world from an emotional distance. The third site, Dia:Beacon, offers an outdoor work that I was warned would be difficult to see on an overcast day. The Dia website shows rhinestones sparkling in the grass behind the gallery building. But New York had had steady snow cover since December and my deadline loomed. After the experience at the Hispanic Society, I was tempted to go anyway to not see it.

—Janet Koplos